

Good Afternoon Madame Chairwoman, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kimberly Marino and I am the Program Manager of the Nurturing Families Network Program at the Community Health Center in Meriden. I am here today to urge you to vote no to the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan.

Under this plan the Nurturing Families Program funded by the Department of Social Services-Children's Trust Fund would be virtually eliminated. The Nurturing Families Network (NFN) operates out of 42 sites state wide and is connected to 29 birthing centers. The program provides education and support for new parents, intensive home visiting services for new parents identified as most at risk and group support. Home visitors become involved during the mother's pregnancy and continue to work with the family until the child turns 5. NFN teaches appropriate expectations and empathetic understanding of children and fosters strategies for enhancing the well being of children. NFN uses a nationally recognized curriculum; Parents as Teachers.

Some facts to keep in mind include:

- Since the beginning of the NFN program in 1995, a total of 6,445 families have received home visiting services.
- Nurturing Families Staff have screened 42,827 first time families since 1999.
- Of those families, 13,320 (31%) screened at high risk.
- Families participating in the NFN program have shown statistically significant reductions in their risk for abuse, particularly in the area of rigidity according to the Child Abuse Potential Inventory.
- Families have shown statistically significant increases in their awareness and use of resources in their communities. This means that parents are more likely to have access to reliable transportation, budget their money better, and have more social interactions with family and friends.
- Employment rates increase significantly during participation in the NFN program, as do education levels.
- Annual rates of abuse and neglect for NFN families have ranged from 1% to 6%, well below the 20-25% we see in other high-risk populations.

NFN reaches more than 4,000 first time families each year and provides services to approximately 1,500 vulnerable families at risk of abusing, neglecting or abandoning their children. Maltreatment rates for NFN families are an average 3% compared to 20% for similar families not participating in this type of program. The immunization rate for two-year olds in the program is 93% compared to 66% for two year olds with similar demographic background on Medicaid. A significant percentage of parents complete high school, become employed and move out of financial hardship due to the support of the NFN program.

The NFN program is cost effective, \$3,000 per year for intensive home visiting, compared to \$30,000 per year for each substantiated DCF case, and over \$44,000 per year for each inmate in Connecticut's

correctional system. An estimated 484 new cases of child abuse and neglect referred to DCF in 2010 at an annual cost \$14.5 million. These costs would continue to accumulate in subsequent years and would ultimately reflect in increased costs to the police, judiciary, penal system and social services.

I urge you to vote against this part of the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan and protect the Nurturing Families Network program.

Respectfully yours,

Kimberly Marino

East Hampton, CT